

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 are pending. Support for new claim 10 may be found in the specification as originally filed, for example, in Figure 1 and the paragraph beginning on line 16 of page 4.

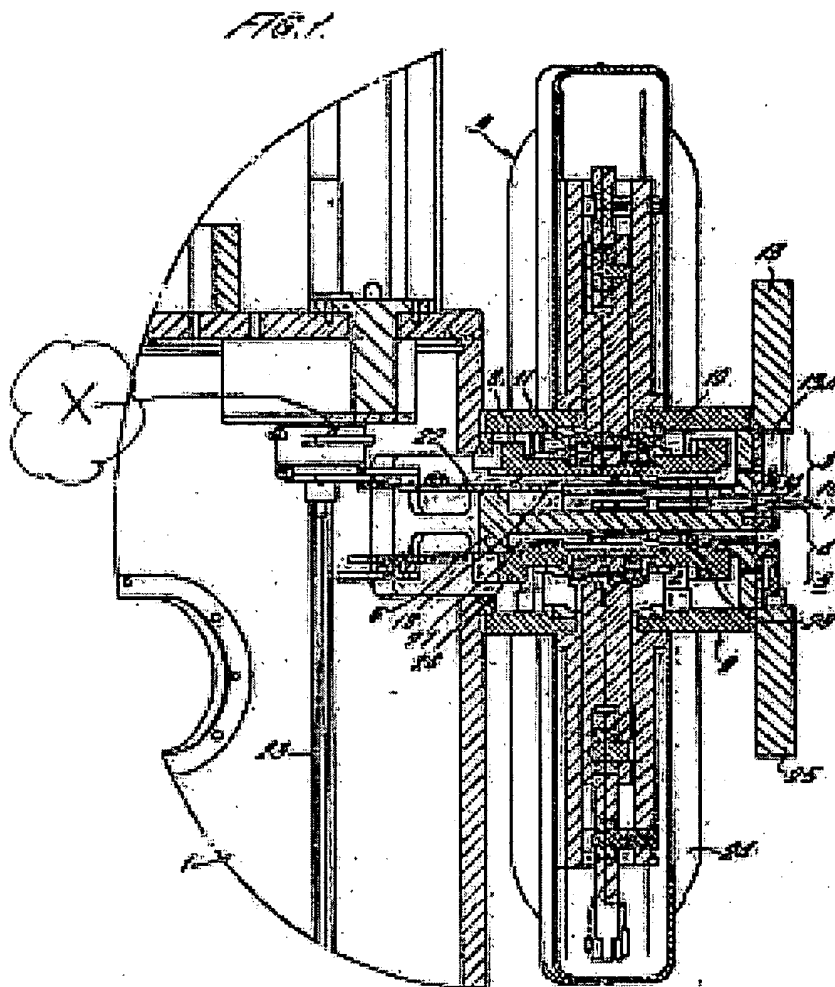
I. The Rejection 35 U.C.S. 102(b) based on Mitchell et al

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Mitchell et al (US 6,350,097).

Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention is not anticipated by or obvious over the disclosures of Mitchell et al and request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this rejection in view of the following remarks.

Claim 8 recites that the first arm is capable of swinging in a first swing direction to move a process object at the load position to the first load-lock mechanism, and at the same time the second arm is capable of swinging in a second swing direction reverse to the first swing direction to move another process object from the first load-lock mechanism to the load position.

Judging from Mitchell et al's Figures 1 and 4, and the description of Mitchell et al concerning Figures 1 and 4, the upper gripper arm 29 is assembled at the position X in the following figure.



In Mitchell et al's Figure 1 the upper loadlock 3 is shown open to the vacuum chamber 1 (Mitchell et al, column 3, lines 10-12). The lower gripper arm 22 is inserted in the upper loadlock 3. In this condition, the upper gripper arm 29 will come in contact with the surface of wall of the vacuum chamber 1 if it is rotated. Therefore, the upper gripper arm 29 cannot be inserted in the upper loadlock 3. At a condition in which the level of the lower gripper arm 22

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flushes with the lower loadlock 4 by making the vertical axis 23 come down, the upper gripper arm 29 will come in contact with the housing 6 if it is rotated.

As described above, in Mitchell et al's apparatus, a motion that the upper gripper arm 29 swings in a first swing direction to move a process object at the load position to the upper loadlock 3 and another motion that the lower gripper arm 22 swings in a second swing direction reverse to the first swing direction to move another process object from the lower loadlock 3 to the load position cannot be performed by the apparatus at the same time.

The apparatus and motion described in Mitchell et al at column 6, lines 27-36, can be interpreted as follows. In the period 43, the lower gripper arm 22 moves the treated wafer to the lower loadlock 4. Then, the upper gripper arm 29 with the wafer in question rotates toward the e-chuck and waits. In this period, the lower gripper arm 22 without a wafer rotates from the lower loadlock 4 (LL) toward the e-chuck. Then the lower gripper arm 22 picks up a treated wafer. The apparatus capable of doing the motion described in Mitchell et al is not an apparatus capable of performing the motions as claimed in the present application.

Applicants respectfully submit that the apparatus as in Mitchell et al does not anticipate or render obvious the apparatus defined in claim 8.

For the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of claim 8 is neither taught by nor made obvious from the disclosures of Mitchell et al and it is requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102 be reconsidered and withdrawn.

II. The Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) based on Dickinson

Claims 1-4 and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by Dickinson (US 6,852,644).

Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention is not anticipated by or obvious over the disclosures of Dickinson and request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this rejection in view of the following remarks.

The Examiner states that claim 1 is considered to only require the external arm to be capable of carrying the object into either one or the other of the load loadlocks, but not necessarily both. Applicants have amended claim 1 for clarity to recite that the external arm is capable of holding a process object and is capable of carrying a held process object into the first load-lock mechanism and is capable of carrying a held process object into the second load-lock mechanism. As shown in Figure 3 of Applicants' specification, the external arm moves the wafer U1 from the aligner to the first load-lock mechanism, and moves the wafer U2 from the aligner to the second load-lock mechanism.

As shown in Dickinson's Figure 3, the external arm 90 is capable of moving a wafer from the aligner 94 to the first loadlock 70, but is not capable of moving a wafer from the aligner 94 to the second loadlock 76.

Claims 2-4 and 7 directly or indirectly depend from claim 1.

For the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of claims 1-4 and 7 is neither taught by nor made obvious from the disclosures of Dickinson and it is requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102 be reconsidered and withdrawn.

III. The Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103 based on Dickinson

Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Dickinson in view of JP 10-125764 (hereinafter JP), previously cited by applicant.

Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Dickinson in view of JP, as applied to claim 5 above, and further in view of Mitchell et al.

Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Dickinson in view of Mitchell et al.

Claims 5, 6 and 9 directly or indirectly depend from claim 1. The disclosures of JP '764 and Mitchell et al do not overcome the deficiencies in the primary reference Dickinson set forth in Section II above.

It is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of claims 5, 6 and 9 is neither taught by nor made obvious from the disclosures of Dickinson, alone or in view of JP '764 or Mitchell et al, and it is requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) be reconsidered and withdrawn.

IV. Conclusion

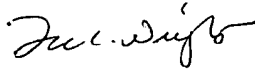
In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that their claimed invention is allowable and ask that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102 and the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103 be reconsidered and withdrawn. Applicants respectfully submit that this case is in condition for allowance and allowance is respectfully solicited.

If any points remain at issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the local exchange number listed below.

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If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,
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